

CHAPTER XXI

The Lord Prepares Most Holy Mary for the Flight into Egypt; the Angel Speaks to St. Joseph; and Other Matters Pertaining to these Events.

606. When most holy Mary and glorious St. Joseph returned from the Presentation of their infant Jesus in the temple, they concluded to stay in Jerusalem for nine days in order to be able each day to visit the temple and repeat the offering of the sacred Victim, their divine Son, thus rendering fitting gratitude for the immense blessing for which they had been singled out from among all men. The heavenly Lady had a special veneration for this number in memory of the nine days during which She had been prepared and adorned by God for the Incarnation of the Word, as I have related in the first ten chapters of this second Part, and also in memory of the nine months during which She had borne Jesus in her virginal womb. In honor of these events She desired to make this novena with her divine Child, presenting Him that many times to the eternal Father as an acceptable offering for her lofty purposes. They began the devotions of the novena every day before the third hour, praying in the temple until nightfall. They chose the most obscure and retired place, meriting thereby the invitation of the master of the banquet in the Gospel: *Friend, go up higher* (Lk. 14:10). This invitation was given to Her on one of those days when She was pouring out her spirit in the presence of the eternal Father in the following words:

607. "Highest King, Lord and Creator of all that has being, here in thy presence lies the useless dust and ashes which thy ineffable condescension has favored with grace such as it neither knew nor ever could know how to merit. I find myself, O Lord, obliged and compelled by the impetuous flood of thy blessings to be grateful. But what return can she offer, who being nothing has received her existence and life from Thee, and who over and above has been overwhelmed by such incomparable mercies and favors of thy most liberal right hand? What return can she render in service of thy immense grandeur? What reverence worthy of thy majesty? What gift to thy infinite Deity, since she is only a creature? My soul, my being, and my faculties, all have I received and continue to receive from thy hands; a thousand times do I offer them in sacrifice to thy glory. I acknowledge my indebtedness not only for having given me all this, but for the love with which Thou hast given it, and because among all creatures thy infinite bounty has preserved me from the contagion of sin and chosen me to give human form to thy Onlybegotten and bear Him in my womb and upon my bosom, though I am only a daughter of Adam and made of lowly and earthly matter. I perceive thy ineffable condescension toward me, O Lord, and in gratitude for it my heart fails and my life is spent in affections of divine love, having nothing else to repay all the favors of thy right hand conferred upon thy handmaid. But now my heart is encouraged and rejoices in possessing a gift to offer to thy greatness, He who is one in substance with Thee (Jn. 10:30), equal in majesty and perfection of attributes, the Onlybegotten of thy intellect, the image of thy being, the fullness of thy own pleasure, thy only and most beloved Son. This, eternal Father and most high God, is the gift which I offer, the Victim which I bring Thee, and this I am sure Thou shalt receive. Having received Him as God, I return Him to Thee God and man. Neither I nor any other creature, O Lord, can ever offer Thee a greater gift, nor can thy Majesty ever demand one more precious. He is so valuable that He shall suffice to repay Thee for what I have received. In his name and in mine I offer and present Him to Thee. I am the Mother of thy Onlybegotten, having given Him human flesh. I have made Him the Brother of mortals, and since He desires to be their Redeemer and Teacher it is befitting for me to be their advocate, to assume their cause and claim assistance for them. Therefore, Father of my

Onlybegotten, God of mercies, I offer Him to Thee from all my heart; with Him and because of Him I beg Thee to pardon sinners, to pour out upon the human race thy mercies of old, and to open new fountains for the renewal of thy wonders (Ecclus. 38:6). This is the Lion of Juda (Apoc. 5:5) become a Lamb in order to take away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29). He is the Treasure of thy divinity.”

608. Such prayers and petitions the Mother of piety and mercy offered up in the first days of her novena in the temple. To all of them the eternal Father responded, accepting the offering of his Onlybegotten as a pleasing sacrifice, being more and more enamored with the purity of his only and chosen Daughter and looking upon her sanctity with pleasure. And in return for her petitions His invincible Majesty conceded to Her great and new privileges, and that as long as the world would last She would obtain all She would ever ask for her devotees; that the greatest sinners, if they earned her intercession, would find their remedy; and in the new Church and evangelical law of Christ her most holy Son She would be the Cooperatrix and Mistress, especially after his Ascension into heaven when the Queen would remain in the Church Militant as its helper and the instrument of the divine power, as I shall relate more particularly in the third Part of this History (*Cor. 2ff.*). Many other favors and mysteries the Most High confirmed upon the heavenly Mother in answer to her prayers; however, they are beyond the reach of spoken language and cannot be described by my short and limited terms.

609. In the course of these manifestations, on the fifth day of the novena after the Presentation and Purification, while the heavenly Lady was in the temple with her infant God on her arms, the Divinity revealed Himself to Her, though not intuitively, and She was entirely elevated and filled with the Holy Ghost. It is true that this had been done to Her before, but since the power of God and his treasures are infinite He never gives so much as not to be able to give still more to the creatures. In this abstractive vision the Most High visited anew his only Spouse, desiring to prepare Her for the labors which were awaiting Her. Speaking to Her He comforted Her, saying: “My Spouse and my Dove, thy desires and intentions are pleasing in my eyes and I delight in them always. But Thou canst not finish the nine days of devotion which Thou hast begun, for I have in store for Thee other exercises of thy love. In order to save the life of thy Son and raise Him up, Thou must leave thy home and thy country; pass with Him and thy spouse Joseph into Egypt, where Thou art to remain until I shall ordain otherwise, for Herod shall try to put the Infant to death. The journey is long, most laborious and fatiguing; do thou suffer it all for my sake, for I am and always will be with Thee.”

610. Any other faith and virtue might have been disturbed (as the incredulous really have been) to see the powerful God fleeing from a miserable earthly being, and that He would do so in order to save his life, as if He, being both God and man, could be affected by the fear of death. But the most prudent and obedient Mother advanced no objection or doubt; She was not in the least disturbed or moved by this unexpected order. Answering She said: “My Lord and Master, behold thy servant with a heart prepared to die for thy love if necessary. Dispose of me according to thy will. This only do I ask of thy immense goodness, that overlooking my lack of merit and gratitude Thou permit not my Son and Lord to suffer, but turn all pains and labors upon me, who am obliged to suffer them.” The Lord referred Her to St. Joseph, bidding Her follow his directions in all things concerning the journey. Therewith She issued from her vision, which She had enjoyed without losing the use of her exterior senses and while holding in her arms the infant Jesus. She had been raised up in this vision only regarding the superior part of her soul, but from it flowed other gifts which spiritualized her senses and testified to Her that her soul was living more in its love than in the earthly habitation of her body.

611. Because of the incomparable love which the Queen bore toward her most holy Son, her maternal and compassionate Heart, rather than being disturbed, was moved to pity, considering the labors awaiting the Infant God which She recognized in this vision. Shedding many tears She left the temple to go to her lodging place, without manifesting to her spouse the cause of her sorrow. St. Joseph therefore thought She grieved because of the prophecy of Simeon. Since the most faithful Joseph loved Her so much, and was of a kind and solicitous disposition, he was troubled to see his Spouse so tearful and afflicted while not manifesting to him the cause of this new affliction. This disturbance of his soul was one of the reasons why the holy Angel spoke to him in sleep, as I have explained above when speaking of the pregnancy of the Queen (400); for in that same night, while St. Joseph was asleep, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and spoke to him as recorded by St. Matthew (2:13): “*Arise, and take the Child and his Mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child in order to take away his life.*” Immediately the holy spouse arose full of solicitude and sorrow, foreseeing also that of his most loving Spouse. Entering upon her retirement, he said: “My Lady, God wills that we be afflicted, for his holy Angel has announced to me the pleasure and the decree of the Almighty that we arise and flee with the Child into Egypt, because Herod is seeking to take away his life. Encourage thyself, my Lady, to bear the labors of this journey, and tell me what I can do for thy comfort, since I hold my life and being at the service of thy Child and Thee.”

612. “My spouse and my master,” answered the Queen, “if we have received from the hands of the Most High such great blessings of grace, it is reasonable that we joyfully accept temporal afflictions (Job 2:10). We bear with us the Creator of heaven and earth; if He has placed us so near to Him, what arms shall be able to harm us, even if it be the arm of Herod (Ib. 17:3)? Wherever we carry with us all our good, and the highest Good, the Treasure of heaven, our Master, our guide and true light, there can be no desert, since He is our rest,* our portion, and our country. All these goods we possess in having his company; let us proceed to fulfill his will.” Then most holy Mary and St. Joseph approached the crib where the infant Jesus lay, and where He, not by chance, slept at that time. The heavenly Mother uncovered Him without awakening Him, for He awaited those tender and sorrowful words of his Beloved: *Flee away, O my Beloved, and be like to the roe and to the young hart upon the mountains of aromatical spices. Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us abide in the villages* (Cant. 8:14; 7:11). And the tender Mother added: “Sweetest Love, meekest Lamb, thy power is not limited by that of earthly kings; but Thou dost desire, in thy exalted wisdom, to hide it for love of men. Who among mortals can think of taking away thy life, O my God? Is it not in thy power to annihilate all life? Since Thou givest life to all, why would men take away thine (Jn. 10:10)? Since Thou dost visit them in order to give them eternal life, why would they wish to give Thee death? But who shall comprehend the secrets of thy divine Providence (Rom. 11:34)? Allow me then, O Lord and light of my soul, to awaken Thee, for when Thou sleepest thy Heart is awake” (Cant. 5:2).

613. Some such sentiments were also expressed by St. Joseph. Then the heavenly Mother, falling upon her knees, awakened the sweetest Infant and took Him in her arms; and He, in order to move Her to greater tenderness, and in order to show Himself as true man, wept a little (O wonders of the Most High in things so small to our weak judgment!). Yet He was soon again quieted, and when the most holy Mother and St. Joseph asked his blessing He gave it to them in a visible manner. Gathering their poor clothing into the casket and loading it on the beast of

* cf. Mt. 11:28 [Ed.]

burden which they had brought from Nazareth, they departed shortly after midnight, and hastened without delay on their journey to Egypt, as I shall relate in the following chapter.

614. I shall here add what I have been made to understand regarding the concordance of the two Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke in regard to this event, for since all of them wrote under the guidance and light of the Holy Ghost each of them knew what the other three had written and what they had omitted to say in their Gospels. Hence it happened that according to divine predisposition some of the happenings of the life of Christ and of the Gospel were described by all four of the Evangelists, while again others mentioned by one were omitted by the others. St. Matthew describes the adoration of the Kings and the flight into Egypt, while these events were not mentioned by St. Luke, who describes the Circumcision, Presentation and Purification, which are omitted by St. Matthew. Thus St. Matthew, after referring to the departure of the Magi, immediately without speaking of the Presentation relates that the Angel appeared to St. Joseph commanding him to flee into Egypt; but it does not follow therefrom that the Child had not been presented before that time in the temple, for it is certain that this was done after the departure of the Kings and before the flight into Egypt, as is narrated by St. Luke. Likewise, although St. Luke after describing the Presentation and Purification immediately mentions that the Holy Family lived in Nazareth, we must not conclude that they had not before that time lived in Egypt; he writes nothing of this flight into Egypt either before or after because it had already been recorded by St. Matthew. And this flight took place immediately after the Presentation, before most holy Mary and St. Joseph returned to Nazareth. As St. Luke had received no commission to write about this journey it was natural that in continuing his history he would mention the return to Nazareth immediately after the Presentation. To say that having fulfilled what the law commanded they returned to Galilee was not to deny the flight into Egypt, but it was merely continuing the narrative without mentioning the flight from Herod. Even the very text of St. Luke intimates that the return to Nazareth happened after their sojourn in Egypt, for he says the Child grew and waxed strong with wisdom, and that grace was manifested in Him (Lk. 2:40), which could not have been before He had passed the years of infancy; hence it must have been after his return from Egypt, and at an age when the use of reason usually begins to show itself in children.

615. I was also given to understand how foolish it is for the infidels or incredulous to stumble against this cornerstone, Christ our Good, even in his infancy, and to take offense at seeing Him flee to Egypt in order to defend Himself against Herod, as if this was due to his weakness and not a mystery, and as if it had happened for no higher purpose than to defend his life against the cruelty of a wicked man. For the well-disposed souls the words of the Evangelist are amply sufficient, since he says it happened so the prophecy of Osee would be fulfilled, who said in the name of the eternal Father: *And I called my Son out of Egypt* (Osee 11:1; Mt. 2:15). The ends which He had in view in sending Him there and in calling Him back are most exalted and mysterious; of these I shall say something soon (641ff.). If not all of the doings of the incarnate Word are equally admirable and sacramental, yet no one with sane judgment can dispute or ignore the sweet providence with which God governs the secondary causes while allowing full liberty to human will (Ecclus. 15:14). For this reason, and not for lack of power, He permits so many idolatries, heresies, and other sins which are not any smaller than that of Herod; for this reason He permitted the crime of Judas and all those which followed in the sufferings and crucifixion of Christ. Certainly He could have prevented all these sins and yet would not, not only because He desired to work our Redemption, but also so He could secure to man freedom of his will in all his actions. He was ready to give to men the helps and graces according to his

divine Providence whereby they could accomplish the good, if they would only use their free will to attain it in the same degree as they use it to follow evil.

616. In this sweetness of his providence He gives sinners time, hoping for their conversion as in the case of Herod. If He would use his absolute power and perform great miracles for preventing the course of secondary causes the order of nature would be confounded, and to a certain extent He would contradict Himself in his double role as the Author of grace and Author of nature. Therefore miracles must happen but rarely and on special occasions for particular reasons, or when some end is to be served; hence God reserves them for the manifestation of his power at certain times. He makes Himself known as the Author of his works by bringing them into existence and preserving them independently of creatures. Neither must we wonder that He consented to the death of the innocent children whom Herod murdered, for it would not have been to their benefit to save them through a miracle, since by their death they would gain eternal life together with an abundant reward which vastly recompensed them for the loss of their temporal life. If they had been allowed to escape the sword and die a natural death not all would eventually have been saved. The works of the Lord are just and holy in all particulars, though we do not always see the reasons why they are so; but we shall come to know them in the Lord when we shall see Him face to face.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MARY MOST HOLY.

617. My daughter, what thou must especially learn from this chapter is to accustom thyself to humble gratitude for the benefits which thou receivest, since thou among many generations art so signalized and enriched by that which my Son and I work with thee without any merit of thine. I was accustomed to repeat many times this verse of David (Ps. 115:12): *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?* In such sentiments I humiliated myself to the dust, esteeming myself altogether useless among creatures. Thus if thou knowest what I did as Mother of God, then consider what thy obligation is, since thou must with so much truth confess thyself unworthy and undeserving of all thou receivest, and poor in giving thanks and rendering a return. Thou must supply thy insufficiency and thy misery by offering up to the eternal Father the living Host of his Onlybegotten made man, especially when thou receivest Him in the holy Sacrament and dost possess Him within thy bosom, for in this thou shouldst also imitate David, who after asking the Lord what return he should make for all his benefits, answers (Ib. 13): *I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.* Thou must accept the salvation offered to thee and bring forth its fruits by the perfection of thy works, calling upon the name of the Lord and offering up his Onlybegotten, for He it is who worked the power of salvation, who merited it, and who alone can be an adequate return for the blessings conferred upon the human race, and upon thee especially. I have given Him human form so He could converse with men (Bar. 3:38) and become the possession of everyone. He conceals Himself under the appearances of bread and wine (Jn. 6:57) in order to accommodate Himself to the needs of each one uniquely, and so each one can enjoy Him and offer Him to the eternal Father. In this way He furnishes to each one an oblation which no one could otherwise offer, and the Most High rests satisfied with it, since there is nothing more acceptable nor anything more precious in the possession of creatures.

618. Besides this oblation, it is very acceptable when souls embrace and endure with equanimity of spirit and suffer patiently the labors and adversities of mortal life. My most holy Son and I were eminent masters in the practice of this doctrine. My Son began to teach it from

the moment in which He was conceived in my womb, for already then He began to suffer, and as soon as He was born into the world He and I were banished by Herod into a desert, and his sufferings continued until He died on the Cross. I also labored to the end of my life, as thou shalt be informed more and more in the writing of this History. Since therefore we suffered so much for creatures and for their salvation, I desire thee to imitate us in this conformity to the divine will as being his spouse and my daughter. Suffer with a magnanimous heart, and labor to increase the possessions of thy Lord and Master, namely souls, who are so precious in his sight and whom He has purchased with his life and blood.* Do not ever flee from labors, difficulties, bitterness and sorrows, if by any of them thou canst gain a soul for the Lord, or thereby induce it to leave the path of sin and enter the path of life. Let not the thought that thou art so useless and poor, or thy desires and labor avail but little, discourage thee, since thou cannot know how the Lord shall accept them and in how far He shall consider Himself served thereby. At least thou shouldst desire to labor assiduously and eat no unearned bread in his house (Prov. 31:27).

* cf. Apoc. 5:9; *Introit* for July 1, Feast of the Most Precious Blood [Ed.]